

## TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

As a natural part of preparation for assuming an adult role in society, matters of a controversial nature will arise and may be dealt with as part of the student's learning experience.

The Board of Education recognizes that controversial issues deal with matters about which there are varied levels of opposing views, biases, emotions and/or conflict. Therefore it is essential that the classroom teacher have guidelines in order to prepare and execute lessons that will be as objective as possible while considering the nature of the subject matter. It is important that students and staff recognize the following responsibilities:

1. When presenting various positions on a controversial issue, the teacher shall take care to balance major views and to assure that as many sides of the issues as possible are presented in a fair manner, with no position being espoused by the teacher as the only one acceptable.
2. When materials dealing with controversial topics are to be used, assigned, or recommended, such materials must:
  - balance major views and provide as many sides of the issue as possible in a fair manner, with no position presented as the only one acceptable;
  - be appropriate to the maturity level of the students; and
  - not adversely affect the attainment of the district's instructional goals or result in substantial disruption of the normal operation of the classroom.

Prior to presenting materials on such an issue, the classroom teacher shall present the materials to the appropriate administrator for prior approval.

3. Before a guest speaker is permitted to address the students, approval must be granted by the Building Principal, who must be informed of the scheduling of all guest speakers at least three (3) days prior to their presentation.

Ref: Education Law §414  
*Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 US 260 (1988)  
*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 US 503 (1969)  
*Board of Ed., Malverne UFSD v. Morgan*, 3020-a panel decision; Howard E. Edelman, Esq., chairman (Feb. 2, 1990)  
*Matter of Morgan*, 29 EDR 363 (1990)  
*Malverne v. Sobol* (RJI #01-90-ST2690) Sup. Ct., Albany County, G. Cobb, J.S.C., 4/1/91

Policy Adopted: January 29, 1997

Wayne Central School District